

PROJECT CONCEPT PAPER

Military Encroachment and Conservation Enhancement at Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach Seal Beach, California

October 3, 2003

ISSUE – Private property exists within the current and proposed future explosives safety zone and ordnance operations area of the wharf at the Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach (WPNSTA SB). The current owner, “Lansdale,” is aggressively pursuing development of the property. This presents a serious impediment to the Navy’s mission and operational readiness.

BACKGROUND - The WPNSTA SB is located in Orange County, California in a fully developed urban area (Figures 1 and 2). The Station is the Navy’s primary west coast installation for ordnance storage, loading and maintenance. The Anaheim Bay areas, including the wharf, are central to the station’s mission.

The Station is also home to the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge and associated wetlands that have been recognized as internationally significant and a breeding stronghold for two endangered species, the Light-footed Clapper Rail and California Least Tern (Figure 3). The Refuge was established by an act of Congress in 1972 as a result of environmental lobby efforts and support of the Dept. of the Navy that first established the wetlands as a conservation area in 1969. Local support and volunteer involvement in the Refuge since its inception are testimony to the both the ecological value and high public interest in these southern California coastal wetlands (Figure 4). The Station encompasses 5000 acres, 1000 of which are wetlands within the Refuge

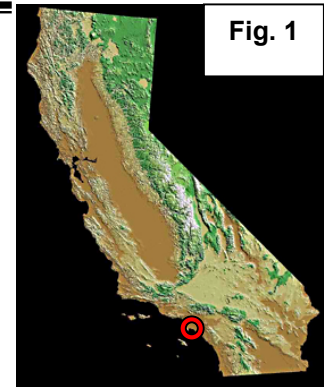


Fig. 1



Fig. 2--Regional and Local Location of Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach (NWSSB)



Fig. 4—Wildlife Observation Platform at Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge



Fig. 3—Federally endangered California Least Tern and Light-footed Clapper Rail

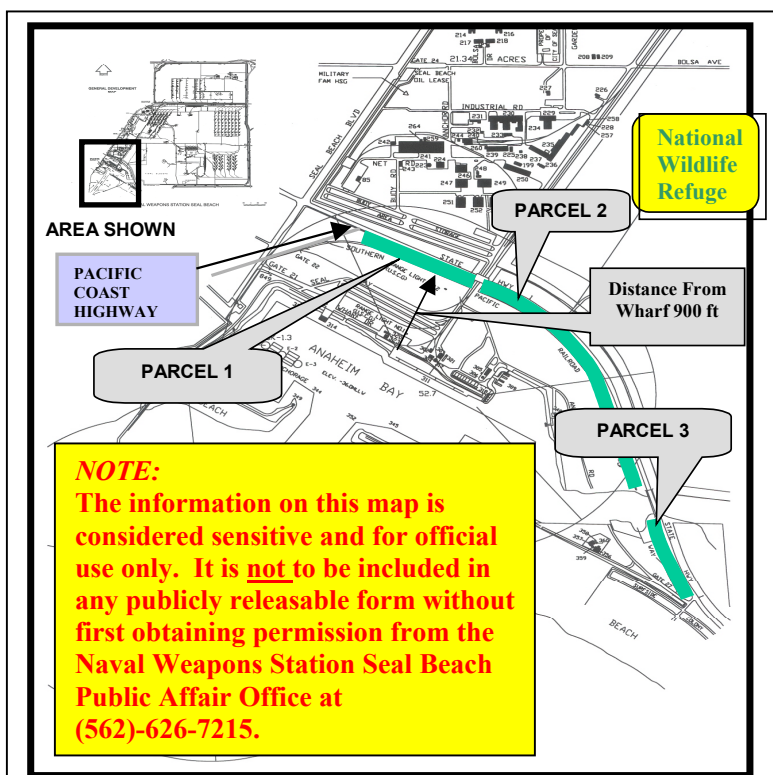
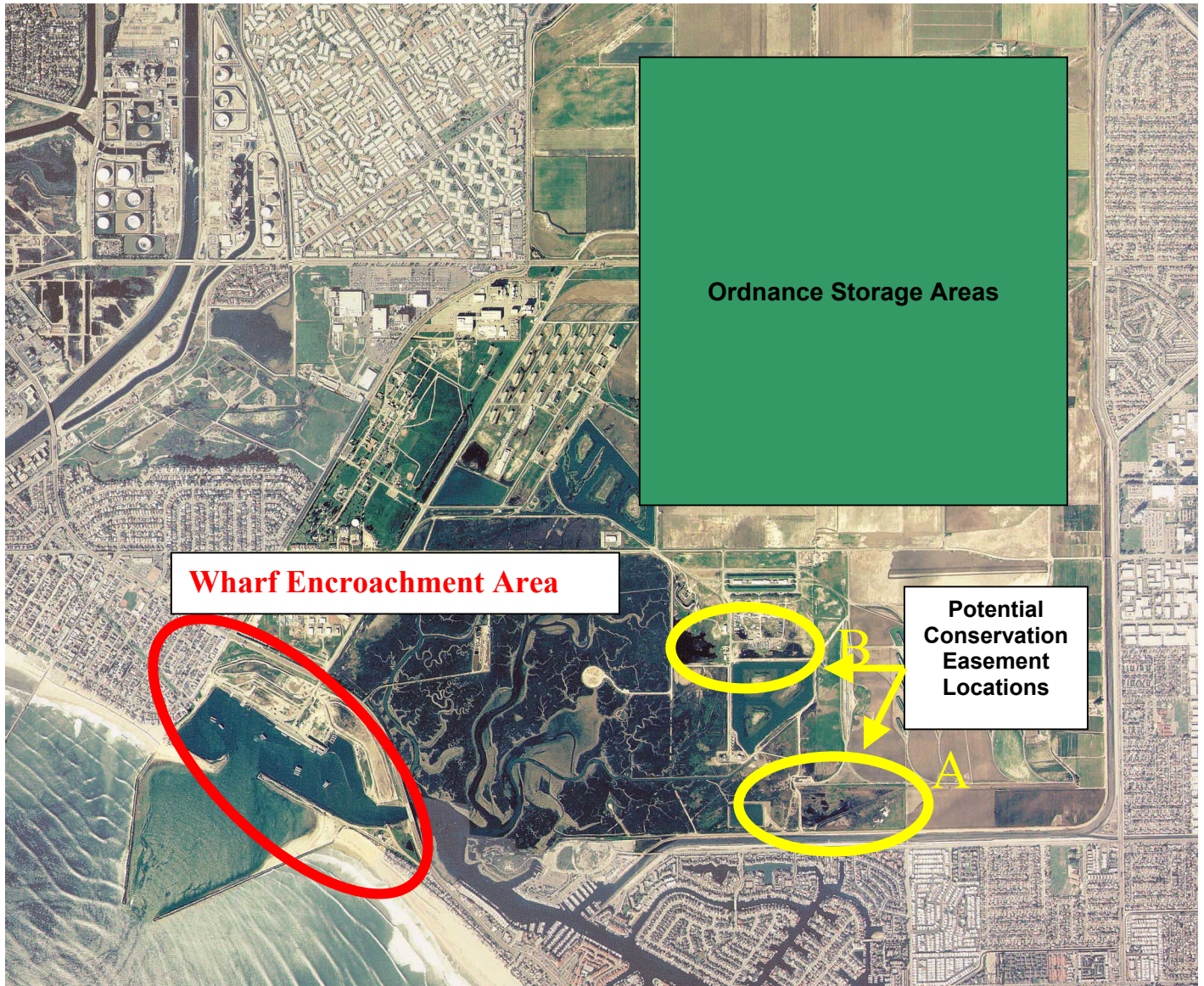


Fig. 5—Location of Lansdale Parcels. Note that these parcels fall within established Explosive Safety Quantity Distance (ESQD) Arcs.

The 11 acres of privately owned property that occurs within the waterfront operational area is of primary concern because it occurs within mandatory explosives safety zones (Figures 5 and 6). On-going efforts to obtain DoD funding to purchase the land directly remain unfunded and are likely to require separate Congressional approval. The Lansdale property is within the current, and encroaches upon the future, Explosives Safety Quantity Distance (ESQD) Arcs that constitute the *minimum* required safety zone for ordnance operations within which all non-essential structures and personnel are prohibited. The 11 acre Lansdale property has very limited current and potential future conservation value due to its geometry, other adjacencies, and operational / mission constraints.



Fig. 6—Lansdale Property (Parcel 1).



PROJECT SCENARIOS – Proposal is to obtain third-party support to buy-out Lansdale and provide property or permanent easement to U.S. Navy to ensure that only military mission will occur in the wharf area. In return, the U.S. Navy proposes to create a permanent easement in-kind to support conservation / open space enhancements. Third party could be a Non-Government Organization or the State of California pursuant to Prop. 40.

- 1) **CONSERVATION EASEMENT ELSEWHERE ON STATION** – Establish a conservation easement in perpetuity within the current boundaries of the WPNSTA SB that has higher potential conservation value than the current Lansdale property. Potential project sites include areas that are well suited to enhancing natural coastal ecosystems, especially those adjacent to the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge and to other potential conservation enhancement projects.
- 2) **LIMITED CONSERVATION EASEMENT ON LANSDALE PROPERTY** – Establish an easement that would improve quality of coastal access by supporting development of a naturally landscaped bike path separated from Pacific Coast Highway traffic.